

Coastal governance in Fisheries Management Areas

FISHING COMMUNITIES and local government units are playing a bigger role in managing coastal resources with the implementation of Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) nationwide. The Department of Agriculture, through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), has identified 12 FMAs that cover bodies of water with shared ecological characteristics and fish stocks.

Rare Philippines is supporting BFAR in FMA 4, which covers Sibuguey Bay and the southern part of the Sulu Sea, and FMA 8, which covers the fishing grounds of Leyte Gulf and Surigao Strait. Many of the partner communities in Rare's flagship program Fish Forever are located around Sibuguey Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay province, and the Siargao and Bucas Grande islands in Surigao del Norte province.

Under Fisheries Administrative Order 263, FMAs shall follow the Ecosystem-based Approach in Fisheries Management, which takes into account both the resources and the people that depend on them. Science-based strategies and participatory governance are applied, replacing the previous practice of managing fisheries resources based on regional and political jurisdiction.

Last January 22, Rare Philippines senior director Lito Mancao signed a memorandum of agreement with BFAR Region 9 Director Isidro M. Velayo Jr. for sharing of expertise and resources in FMA 4. A few weeks later, on February 7, Rare Philippines Vice President Rocky Sanchez Tirona signed a similar agreement with BFAR Region 8 Director Juan Albaladejo. Rare's senior policy manager Dennis Calvin facilitated the new partnerships, which include public awareness and capacity building activities in coastal fishing communities.



Mangrove sanctuary guard Cedric Isidro Rosco protects the century-old trees in the Municipality of Tudela, one of our Fish Forever partners in the Camotes islands in Cebu.
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As part of the collaboration, Tirona discussed behavior adoption and communications techniques with government fisheries personnel across the country in a virtual workshop last May 1, which was organized and livestreamed by BFAR as part of Farmers and Fisherfolks Month. Rare and BFAR also developed a training module designed for blended and interactive learning, which explains the importance of FMAs and how relevant sectors such as local government units and fishers can actively take part in effectively managing their fishing grounds. The partnership covers the training of BFAR staff and technical assistance to BFAR in the rollout of the module in 2021.

With many training activities put on hold due to the pandemic, Rare co-

sponsored an online Kamustahan last October 7 that brought together the management body of FMA 8 including mayors, representatives from the academe, and members of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils. They identified priority actions such as the crafting of an FMA plan, convening the Science Advisory Group, formalizing the members of the management board, and presentation of the status of fishery stocks in FMA-8. Meanwhile, for FMA 4, a virtual meeting was held with BFAR Region 9 and the production of information materials, particularly a booklet on fish species and fishing gear booklet, and how to resolve limitations in internet connectivity when online platforms are tapped during the rollout of FMA training modules.

Municipal fisheries in the time of Covid-19

ONE YEAR AFTER co-hosting the National Coastal Fisheries Summit, BFAR renewed its partnership with Rare Philippines and the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) at the Marriott Hotel in Pasay City last March 10. More than 1,000 municipal mayors witnessed the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement among BFAR Director Eduardo Gongona, LMP President Mayor Luis Singson, and Rare Philippines Vice President Rocky Sanchez Tirona that aims to enhance fisheries governance for the benefit of the country's 1.8 million small-scale fishers.

The Technical Working Group on Preferential Rights for Municipal Fishers, which was created after the summit, held an online forum last Sept. 10 on the delineation of municipal waters for cities and municipalities that have offshore islands. After the forum, more than 100 local government units signed a statement endorsing the archipelagic principle that marks the starting point for the delineation of the 15-kilometer municipal waters for cities and municipalities from their farthest island. Around 30 LGUs also issued municipal resolutions supporting the principle. As a result, BFAR has issued a memo supporting the archipelagic principle in municipal water delineation for offshore islands and started drafting the guidelines, a win for municipal fishers under the amended Fisheries Code.

Meanwhile, the Technical Working Group on Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing that was also an outcome of the summit successfully pushed for the filing of national legislation that would benefit fish wardens that are guarding marine protected areas and municipal waters. The "Bantay Dagat Welfare and Incentives Act" was filed at the Senate last November, which mirrors a bill filed earlier at the House of Representatives. The proposed legislation aims to provide Bantay Dagat personnel with insurance, PhilHealth coverage, hazard and subsistence



Fishing community in the village of Villahermosa in Cebu.
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allowance, training, and access to loans. It also grants security of tenure to the sea wardens, most of whom work on a voluntary basis.

For the Technical Working Group on Marine Protected Areas, priority plans discussed at a meeting in January to strengthen the capacity of LGUs in managing fish sanctuaries inside municipal waters were put on hold due to the pandemic. As part of the celebration of the Month of the Oceans in May, however, they were able to conduct an online forum entitled The Importance of Marine Protected Areas for Food Security in the Time of COVID 19, which highlighted the experiences of LGUs in protecting fishery habitats to improve fish stocks, especially with increased encroachment due to the pandemic.

Another commitment from the fisheries summit was achieved last October 26 with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between BFAR Director Gongona and Pangingsda Natin Gawing Tama (PaNaGaT) Network coordinator Dinna Umengan that will build the capacity of fisheries technicians in selected coastal communities. The project will be implemented by the Tambuyog Development Center and aims to support field personnel so they can eventually become Municipal Fisheries Officers. Rare Philippines is a member of PaNaGaT and some of the partner communities in the province of Antique are pilot sites of the project.

When quarantine measures were imposed in March, the importance of Community Fish Landing Centers (CFLCs) as a vital economic hub for fishery products became apparent in coastal communities. In an online forum last Oct. 9 organized by Rare together with the National Anti-Poverty Commission - Artisanal Fisherfolk Sectoral Council, BFAR, and PaNaGaT, participants learned that the facilities have not been utilized fully especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, as only about 50% of the CFLCs are operational. Several LGUs pointed out the need to conduct social preparation for government personnel and fisher's organizations, and the establishment of clear partnerships with BFAR in managing CFLCs.

Case Study on Commercial Fishing in Municipal Waters

TO UNDERSTAND WHY some local governments are allowing commercial fishing within the 10.1- to 15-kilometer limit of their municipal waters, Rare collaborated with Ateneo de Manila's John J. Carroll Institute for Church Social Issues in an assessment of the policy in four sites: Pandan in Antique, Coron in Palawan, Subic in Zambales, and Zamboanga City. The study showed that these LGUs allow commercial fishing vessels to operate inside municipal waters to generate additional income through business permits, and to accommodate requests from their constituents. However, weak implementation of the law was observed along with conflicts in the use of marine resources. Municipal fishers who were displaced have reported a decline in their fish catch and income. The study recommended stricter law enforcement, assessment of the fishing grounds to determine the extent of fisheries these can sustain, and giving preferential access to municipal fishers.

Adapting to Climate Change

IN LINE WITH THE SCIENTIFIC PRIORITIES identified for climate change during the National Coastal Fisheries Summit last year, Rare co-sponsored the Technical Conference on Coastal, Marine, and Oceans in collaboration with the Climate Change Commission (CCC) in November 2019. One of the conference outputs is the creation of a data platform that will take stock of current data, tools, and methodologies on climate change vulnerability assessments in the fisheries sector. The University of the Philippines, DA-BFAR, and CCC are providing technical and financial support for the data platform, which will have an open data policy in order to maximize access to users. Conference participants also agreed to pursue other priorities including the mainstreaming of climate change and disaster risk reduction and management planning among various sectors.



Technical conference participants discuss climate adaptation tools for coastal fishers

The Climate Change Technical Working Group created after the fisheries summit has also come up with a policy paper on climate change options for the fisheries sector, which was signed by civil society members of the group. They are pushing for the inclusion of the fisheries sector in the climate change agenda of the Philippine government, particularly the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and Nationally

Determined Contributions (NDC). The paper has been adopted by DA-BFAR and forwarded to the DA's Systems-Wide Climate Change Office for inclusion in the sectoral contribution to the NAP and NDC. Rare is collaborating with DA-BFAR's National Fisheries and Research Development Institute in drafting the scientific basis of the policy paper.

Climate change calendar

- Rare presented the Fish Forever program as an ecosystems-based adaptation (EbA strategy in the National Adaptation Convention organized by the CCC during the Climate Change Consciousness Week in November 2019



- At the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP25) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2019, Rare submitted a position paper from Civil Society Organizations calling for an increase in representation and more technical, scientific, and financial assistance for the fisheries sector due to its vulnerability in developing countries like the Philippines. They also pushed for the strengthening of financial mechanisms under the Convention to provide a balanced funding portfolio for climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, as well as the inclusion of behavior change strategies to address the challenge of destructive human behaviors that lead to climate threats.
- The Climate Change Commission co-sponsored the online forum "The Great Web: COVID-19, Climate Change, and The Ocean" with Rare's Policy Manager Atty. Alexandra Gamboa as moderator last May 26. Resource speakers were scientists Doralyn Dalisay and Jonel Saludes from the University of San Agustin in Iloilo City, who talked about potential medicine that can be derived from the country's rich marine biodiversity. Meanwhile, Dr. Mudjekeewis D. Santos from DA-BFAR's National Fisheries Research and Development Institute shared some insights about the impact of climate change on the ocean's resources.

Financing for Coastal Fisheries

WITH MANY COASTAL GOVERNMENTS reeling from the Covid-19 crisis, Rare and the Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF) conducted a webinar last June focusing on the role of financing in helping local governments mobilize resources for their healthy emergency response and recovery efforts. The webinar presented two financing options targeted for LGUs – the Landbank HEAL lending program and the Development Bank of the Philippines' Rehabilitation Support Program on Severe Events (RESPONSE). The online forum sought to increase understanding of the LGUs on the processes and requirements for accessing these funds, and to gain awareness on how to access technical assistance in availing of these financing opportunities. Ultimately, the webinar highlighted the need to make access to financing more efficient so that available resources can be optimized for rebuilding coastal economies that are dependent on fisheries.

Rare also renewed its partnership with BLGF to continue working on the following:

- Analysis of LGU Fiscal Capacity in relation to coastal fisheries management – this will facilitate the identification of existing and potential mechanisms for funding LGU projects on coastal fisheries
- Policy and Governance – develop recommendations that will help LGUs manage their resources and identify

TWG UPDATES: Sustainable Finance

Accomplishments

- TWG meeting – June 26, 2019
- On the DBM guideline on the use of Internal Revenue Allotment for Coastal Resource Management (CRM)
- DILG – discussion on funding support guideline for the establishment of the Coastal Resources Management Office (CRMO) and additional funding

The LMP calls the DA- BFAR, BLGF, DBM, NEDA to form a Technical Working Group (TWG) to be lodged under the Coastal Fisheries Task Force to deal on issues for the sector as described above.

RESOLVED FINALLY, to furnish a copy of this resolution to the LGUs for information and guidance.

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED this 7th day of March, 2019, City of

CERTIFIED BY:

MAYOR ABRAHAM T. BURAHAN
Secretary General
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ATTESTED BY:

opportunities and enabling mechanisms for inter-LGU cooperation for sustainable financing for coastal fisheries

- Capacity Development – design and implement modules based on the results of the fiscal analysis of LGUs, with the goal of developing initial projects that are eligible for financing

The Technical Working Group on Sustainable Financing, one of the groups formed after the fisheries summit, reconvened for their 2nd meeting last November 10. The report on the fiscal analysis of 75 LGUs which aims to facilitate understanding of the borrowing capacity of LGUs, their regulatory fee structure, and ability to manage loans was launched during the meeting. Local development funds and devolution transition plans were also discussed as ways forward in accessing resources for coastal fisheries. ▶

RIISING TIDE

Understanding the Fiscal Capacity of 75 Philippine Local Government Units for Sustainable Coastal Fisheries Financing



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Blue Financing Framework

RARE AND WORLD WILDLIFE FUND conducted a workshop in August 2020 as a familiarization exercise in developing the Blue Financing Framework with BFAR. Resource persons provided examples of guidelines based on internationally recognized standards and identified priority projects for BFAR, including

ongoing projects that need to make a transition to sustainable financing models. The framework aims to align programs that contribute to a more sustainable marine and fisheries sector with globally accepted environmental and social governance standards. This will become the basis for decisions from the Department of Finance and other agencies regarding the issuance of financing instruments that would meet the standards. This exercise will also allow the government to identify elements of its

programs that can be funded purely from the public budget, and which ones have the potential to attract private capital or will require a blended finance approach. The Technical Working Group from BFAR assigned to this task was reorganized in November and is currently finalizing the framework in partnership with other relevant government agencies.